

Twin Chimneys (R. O. Forrest House)  
168 W. King St.  
Hillsborough  
Orange County  
North Carolina

HABS No. NC-313

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NC,  
68- HILBO,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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NC,  
68-1411  
15-

Historic American Building Survey

Name of Structure - Twin Chimneys (R. O. Forrest House)

Address - 168 W. King Street  
Hillsborough, N. C.

Present Owner - Mrs. R. O. Forrest  
168 W. King Street  
Hillsborough, N. C.

Present Occupant - Mrs. R. O. Forrest  
168 W. King Street  
Hillsborough, N. C.  
(Note: Occupation intermittent)

Present Use - Private dwelling.

Brief Statement of Significance - All indications are that this is a Pre-Revolutionary house. It is built on land originally owned by Edmund Fanning. It is an excellent example of "Piedmont" architecture and is especially notable for its fine double twin chimneys. It has been associated with numerous important early figures: William Duffy, the attorney; the Rev. John Knox Witherspoon, and Hugh Waddell. It is sometimes known as "the Old Postoffice." It provides the setting for much of Sara Beaumont Kennody's Revolutionary novel, Joscelyn Cheshire.

Date of Erection: Tradition has always said that the house was built before the Revolution. A house of this shape appears on this site on C. J. Sauthier's Map of Hillsborough (October, 1768).

Architect: None Known

Builder, suppliers, etc. - None known.

Original Plan, Construction, etc. - The Forrest House has been traditionally known as one of Hillsborough's earliest houses. It rests on a high foundation, and the basement has the usual hard-packed earthen floor. The house is an extremely narrow one. It has a central hall plan with two small rooms to a side. An enclosed staircase, very interesting with its wide horizontal planking and good molding, leads upstairs from between the two rooms on the left side. Reeded pine mantels, probably later than the house, are in the downstairs rooms. The upstairs is similar. The attic originally had three dormers. The house has great twin chimneys on either side. Tradition also says that John Berry may have remodeled the house in the 1840's, but the arched window frames in front were used in Hillsborough in the 1880's and '90's. The separate frame kitchen at the rear (now connected to the house) has an exceptionally wide-based brick chimney of the Williamsburg type.

Physical History:

Original and Subsequent Owners:

1. Aug. 29, 1768 (DB 2, 537-538) - Town Commissioners of Hillsborough sell Lots 21 and 31 to Edmund Fanning who has built "a Mansion House" thereon - for 40 shillings "Proc."

2. October, 1768 - C. J. Sauthier's Map of Hillsborough, dated Oct., 1768, shows a house set flush with King Street which may be the R. O. Forrest House. It apparently sits partly on Lot 22. Fanning owned nearly all of the 10-acre block, and Lots 21, 22, 31, and 32 were undivided. Hedge rows enclosed Lots 21 and 31 on the street sides.
3. Aug. 25, 1786 (DE 3, 30) - Richard Caswell, Governor, sells the confiscated property of Edmund Fanning (Lot 21) to Roswell Huntington (the silversmith) for 501 pounds. (Note: 1786 was a year of inflation)
4. Nov. 24, 1787 (DE 3, 32) - Roswell Huntington sells Lot 21 to John Mirick Whitney for 85 pounds. (Could this be 850 pounds?)
5. April 15, 1788 (DE 3, 54) - John Mirick Whitney sells Lot 21 to (Dr.) Robinson Mumford, Esq. for 500 pounds.
6. Sept. 4, 1788 (DE 4, 207) - Robinson Mumford sells Lot 21 to Daniel Mallett "with all the buildings and improvements thereon" for 400 pounds. (Note: Daniel Mallett was the younger brother of Peter Mallett.)
7. \_\_\_\_\_. No deed from Daniel Mallett exists in the Orange County Courthouse. Since the Malletts and the Moores were closely associated in business (i. e., Peter Mallett and Maurice Moore), it seems likely that Alexander Duncan Moore acquired the house and lot directly from David Mallett.
8. April 15, 1793 (DE 5, 18) - Alexander Duncan Moore sells Lot 21 "with all the buildings and improvements thereon" to John Fairman for 150 pounds.
9. April 1, 1794 (DE 5, 106) - John Fairman sells Lot 21 "with all the Buildings and improvements thereon" to James Coughlin for 950 pounds. (Note: The price may be a copyist's error, or it may indicate some new structure.)
10. Aug. 12, 1797 (DE 6, 374-375) - By order of the sheriff, Joseph Hodge, the estate of John Fearman (sic) is sold (3 lots including Lot 21). Samuel Benton buys Lot 21 for 205. 18. 10 pounds.
11. Sept. 11, 1797 (DE 6, 401) - Samuel Benton sells Lot 21 to James Coghlin (sic) for 205. 18. 10 pounds.
12. Sept. 13, 1797 (DE 6, 397-398) - James Coghlin, merchant of Hillsborough, sells Lot 21 to William Duffy (the attorney-at law) for \$595.12.
13. Jan. 18, 1802 (DE 10, 347-348) - William Duffy, attorney-at-law, now of Chatham Co., sells Lot 21 to Martha Strudwick, widow, for \$1200.
14. August, 1805 - Will of Martha Strudwick (Will Book D, 154) dated Aug. 6, 1803, leaves estate to Samuel Strudwick, her grandson, "when he arrives at 20." (Samuel is the son of Martha's son, William F. Strudwick.) Deeds note that Lot 21 in the intervening years is called "William F. Strudwick's lot", so presumably he lived there.

15. July 26, 1817 (DB 16, 144) - Samuel Strudwick sells Lot 21, "all that Tract, parcel and lot of Land with Improvements thereon" to (Rev.) John H. (K.) Witherspoon for \$1000.
16. Mar. 1, 1832 \_\_\_\_\_ John H. (K.) Witherspoon conveys Lot 21 to Frederick Nash. No deed is registered, but see deed below for reference.
17. Mar. 1, 1832 (DB 25, 184) - Frederick Nash sells to Joseph B. Skinner of Chowan County "that Lot or parcel of ground formerly owned by the Rev. John Witherspoon in the Town of Hillsborough on which he resided and now in the occupation of Mrs. Carter, known and distinguished in the plan of said town by Lot No. 21" (A note on the margin of the deed says that this deed "covers all the land owned in the Town of Hillsborough by John Witherspoon and by him conveyed to Frederick Nash March 1, 1832." (See also DB 26, 421).
18. April 10, 1838 (DB 28, 280-281) - Joseph B. Skinner of Chowan County sells Lot 21, "that lot or parcel of land in the Town of Hillsborough whereon the Rev. John Witherspoon formerly resided (described in the deed from Frederick Nash to Joseph B. Skinner) to Hugh Waddell for \$1800.
19. Dec. 22, 1852 (DB 34, 506) - Hugh Waddell after 14 years sells Lot 21 "together with all Houses, outhouses, and Fixtures of Every Kind thereon to William F. Strayhorn for \$2000." (Evidently there is more than one house.)
20. Jan. 2, 1869 (DB 42, 54) - John Turner, Sheriff of Orange, carrying out a Superior Court writ against W. F. Strayhorn and Calvin E. Parrish for \$2541.75 offers Lot 21 for public sale Jan. 2, 1869. Ike R. Strayhorn purchases it for \$1203.
21. Oct. 4, 1873 (DB 42, 55) - Ike R. Strayhorn mortgages Lot 21 to James C. Scarlett for \$500. Mortgage paid by Mrs. H (arriet) H. Strayhorn, July 11, 1880.  
(Harriet H. Strayhorn was postmaster of Hillsborough from May 26, 1873 to Sept. 27, 1881, when William F. Strayhorn was appointed. He served until May 22, 1882.)
22. May 21, 1875 (DB 43, 247) - Ike R. Strayhorn sells Lot 21, "the lot where the said H. H. Strayhorn now resides" to Harriet H. Strayhorn for \$1203.00.
23. June 23, 1875 (DB 43, 428-429) - Wm. F. Strayhorn and Harriet H. Strayhorn sign mortgage deed to Hillsboro Building and Loan Association for \$500. (Mortgage paid Sept. 22, 1877).
24. June 11, 1885 (DB 48, 336) - John F. Strayhorn sells Lot 21 "known as the Strayhorn place containing 1 1/2 acres" (actually part of Lot 31), to Dudley M. Laws for \$1450.
25. Aug. 10, 1895 (DB 55, 51) - Dudley M. Laws deeds Lot 21 "containing 1 1/2 acres" to Sarah M. Laws for \$1000.

26. Jan. 29, 1900 (DB 55, 564) - D. M. Laws and Sarah Laws deed a portion of Lot 21, a tract 83' x 180', stretching along the northern side from Wake St. to S. M. Gattis' line, to W. A. Davies for \$200.
27. Nov. 8, 1900 (DB 56, 110-111) - Sarah M. Laws and D. M. Laws sell Lot 21, "known as the Strayhorn place" containing 1 1/2 acres more or less excepting that portion sold to W. A. Davies, to D. C. Parks in an exchange of lots plus \$300.
28. Jan. 8, 1902 (DB 56, 459) - D. C. Parks sells Lot 21 to B. B. and O. J. Forrest for \$1100.
29. June 7, 1902 (DB 57, 62) W. A. Davies sells the northern portion of Lot 21 (83' x 180') to B. B. and O. J. Forrest for \$225. (Now Lot 21 again contains about 1 1/2 acres.)
30. Nov. 10, 1932 (DB 127, 289) - O. J. Forrest sells to B. B. Forrest his half interest in Lot 21 (except for the northern 83' x 180' portion) for \$750.
31. Jan. 6, 1950 - Will of O. J. Forrest (Will Book M, 381), dated Apr. 4, 1929, leaves dwelling house on King St. to his sisters Margaret and Josephine, thereafter to his brother, B. B. Forrest. (Note that will was made three years before half-interest in house was sold.) Jan. 6, 1950 is date of recording of will.
32. Aug. 15, 1947 - Will of B. B. Forrest (Will Book M, 242), dated Jan. 11, 1947. His widow, Mollie B. Forrest, is to have the house where he now lives (on the corner of King and Wake Sts.); his son, Robert O., is to have the house in which he lives ("the R. O. Forrest House"), the "size of the lot to be determined by the others". Notes that wills from brother O. J. and son Felix are both unrecorded at this date. (See above.)
33. Present owner of house - Mrs. R. O. Forrest.

Notes on Alterations and Additions: Originally the house had three small dormers in the roof. Probably it had a portico rather than the present front porches. Its frame kitchen with chimney was separate but has now been connected to the house. Inside, a wide door has been cut between sitting-room and dining room; paneling in the narrow entrance hall came from the Nash and Kollock School and the chair rail there came from the southwest room (the library) at Moorefields. A bathroom has been added at the rear on the first floor, also a flagstone-floored porch. There is some indication that some "modernization" took place in the 1880's or '90's. Recently minor repairs have been made to the front porch.

Historical Events Connected with Structure: In all probability some portion of the house existed in 1768. Tradition says firmly that a Revolutionary heroine hid her lover in the cubby-hole under the attic stairs when Cornwallis' troops marched along King Street (this is the basis for the novel, Joscelyn Cheshire). The silversmith, Roswell Huntington, lived here and may have used the house as his shop. William Duffy, the well-known attorney owned the house as did Rev. John Knox Witherspoon.

Recent research indicates that Archibald Murphy may have lived here when he studied law with Duffy and that he may have died here since he apparently rented this house from Reverend Witherspoon in 1831-'32. Later significant owners are Hugh Waddell and the Strayhorns.

Old Views: None known.

Sources of Information: (1) Deeds Books and Will Books of Orange County in Orange County Courthouse, Hillsborough, N. C.; (2) Interviews with Mrs. B. B. Forrest and Miss Mary B. Forrest; (3) C. J. Sauthier's Map of Hillsborough of October, 1768; (4) illustrated feature article in Durham Herald (1948); (5) Sara Beaumont Kennedy's novel, Joscelyn Cheshire; (6) information from Edward T. Draper-Savage, Moorefields; (7) information from Dr. Herbert S. Turner, Staunton, Va., now working on a biography of Archibald D. Murphy.